

# The Architect: Four Countries Four Faces I

Marga Jann, DPUC, RIBA, AIA



Published by Arrow Gate Publishing Ltd 2019

15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6

Copyright © Marga Jann 2019

The right of Marga Jann to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, and Designs Patent Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claim for damages.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-913142-04-9

eBook 978-1-913142-05-6

Arrow Gate Publishing 85, Great Portland Street, London W1W 7LT

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Visit [www.arrowgatepublishing.com](http://www.arrowgatepublishing.com) to read more about our books and to buy them. You will also find articles, author interviews, writing tips and news of any author events, and you can sign up for our e-newsletters so that you're always first to read about our new releases.

For my children

*‘Oh, that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory,  
that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me  
from evil, that I may not cause pain.’*

–1 CHRONICLES 4 10 NKJV



Some of the narratives in this trilogy are true, some are hypothetical, and some are allusion or illusion—often names and places are changed to protect those involved

# Cambridge, 2005

IT TOOK A WHILE for the garrulous Porter to notice the stealthy figure in the upper left-hand security monitor while we chatted about the forthcoming conference on architectural education. The monochromatic image included a view of my ivy-covered Cambridge College outer door, the lock of which the dark figure in the monitor was toying with far too deftly.

The seamless black silhouette was indubitably that of a tallish woman in an abaya and hijab.

I had suspected someone had been watching and pursuing me for some time (beyond the omnipresent internet and ‘security camera’ surveillance) —I had learned too much and the professorial research I was

writing up, benign though it was, had recently gone online (see the articles at the end of this tome).

Also, I was an espousing non-violent Quaker Christian teaching architecture in fundamentalist Muslim arenas (which included hostile Saudi Arabia) where I had previously been targeted as a persona non-grata. Though I sensed an imminent accounting, I nonetheless expected my discovery to take longer. Below is my narrative; I leave it to the reader to determine why, apart from the obvious faith issues, anyone might be remotely interested in me.

## Sri Lanka

As an architect and Fulbright scholar to Sri Lanka after the 2004 tsunami, I did not expect to walk into and unwittingly uncover a criminal arena involving international drug and arms trade, misappropriation of relief funds, pervasive computer hacking, extensive money laundering, terrorism, and trafficking linked to hidden academic and political agendas.

The only transgression missing was murder, and that could now follow soon enough. My teaching and research were to take me to lecture halls as far afield as Korea,

Cyprus, and Uganda— where I acquired significant Islamic shadows—both extreme and hermetic.

I write from the relative security of my self-styled ‘safe house’ as a Visiting Fellow at the University of Cambridge—fertile recruiting ground for MIs in tandem to its wider and better-known academic mission, where no one would have expected a mature, scholarly architect and professor to be up to anything more than ‘pedestrian’. Indeed, Lucy Cavendish College, my home base, was founded to support the studies and research of ‘mature women’ and as such had a reputation for being seriously and uniquely academic.

I expected the air to be hot and humid upon my arrival in Sri Lanka, but even my research stint in Delhi, India as a Swarthmore College undergrad did not prepare me for the sweltering wave of heat that slapped me harshly as I walked off the plane. After a brief adjustment period (and over 30 mosquito bites during my first night in dengue-infested Colombo), I began my design teaching stint with a focus on disaster-relief housing. The Fulbright Commission was located down the street from the office of a Cambridge colleague who put me in touch with the Architecture Department at the University of Moratuwa, and I soon found myself teaching at both U Moratuwa and the Colombo School of Architecture. But it wasn’t until I started working ‘in the field’ as an architect that



huge NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) anomalies began to surface, and moral dilemmas confronted me on what seemed an almost daily basis.

There had been twenty-six different branches of the Red Cross from at least as many countries working in Sri Lanka at that time, mostly disorganised and largely stepping on each other's toes. The scope of the tsunami disaster was such that NGO workers immediately flew in with little planning or preparation. People donated with excellent intentions but gave little consideration to whom or what precisely they were giving, and churches sent missionaries and individual 'do-gooders' without 'thinking things through'—e.g. blankets and crates of bottled water were delivered to a tropical country with oppressive year-round heat and huge stockpiles of mineral water. In many ways, this 'knee-jerk' reaction added to the chaos more than to the aid effort. Furthermore, NGO websites provided clear directives as to how to make donations, but none offered counsel or help to the tens of thou-sands in need.

The Head of the Sri Lankan Red Cross, for one, had told me that \$500,000,000 received in relief aid would not be available for 'short-term reconstruction' although the design work my students and I had produced was 'greatly appreciated'. The director and his abaya-clad assistant explained that the funds had been 'put aside' at

a high-interest rate in Switzerland for ‘long-term development’. As a colleague wrote to me in her email of 8 August 2014, ‘All is well here in Sri Lanka. The country is changing fast with new roads, sidewalks, parks and buildings every-where. It is nice to see...’ And another colleague mentioned in an email of 6 September 2014: ‘A lot of international projects are under construction. You will see a big change in the urban fabric of Colombo and some of the other cities. An improvement to the builtscapes I must say.’ So, though these Red Cross donations did not go towards immediate tsunami relief and reconstruction as intended, on an encouraging note much funding appears to have gone into long-term development as opposed to permanent deep private pockets.

Despite the colossal amount of capital pouring into the island, trying to find backing to construct our pro-bono, sustainably designed disaster-relief shelters for the vast destitute of post-tsunami Sri Lanka was almost like trying to find a needle in a haystack.

Habitat for Humanity and the Colombo Scots Kirk (Church) were the only entities to show true interest in our design work—enough to provide the incentive we needed to continue with our small reconstruction effort, and which unwittingly led to intense involvement with

The architect: four countries four faces

the Tamil Tiger controlled North and Pakistani refugee community.



Sri Lankan student work (prototypical disaster relief housing) presentation to Habitat for Humanity

The Scots Kirk was a popular meeting place for expats who were there not just for its spiritual dimension but for many other forms of sanctuary—many were refugees fleeing persecution on their home front. A Pakistani Anglican pastor claimed to know where Osama Bin Laden was, and it was generally understood by the entire Pakistani community that Bin Laden was incontestably in Pakistan with the US government naively and unknowingly ‘paying’ President Musharraf to protect him. The wife of a Pakistani ambassador I had met in my travels inadvertently confirmed this conviction.

Shortly after settling in Colombo, I was sent to Islamabad by the United States Government as a regional Fulbright specialist following the 2005 earthquake which had just devastated the northern

region of Pakistan. I was invited to give talks there on our tsunami-related design work in Sri Lanka to a group of Fulbright scholars who had also been posted to South Asia, as well as on earthquake reconstruction to numerous Pakistani officials outlining our ‘live project’ methodology (designs for real clients which have the potential of getting built)—which, by the way, has largely since been adopted and implemented by Pakistani ‘starchitects’ such as Yasmeen Lari. In one of my audiences, I noticed a figure entirely veiled in black—attire not uncommon for Pakistan but not typical indigenous garb either—she was unsettlingly sitting in the front row assiduously taking notes and filming my talk.

Traversing the airport in Karachi had been tortuous as I was the only woman there except for four nuns who became my ‘security blanket’ and to whom I stuck like glue; I subsequently heard in the local news that terrorists had killed those four nuns and the story shattered me. A short while later, a talented and gracious British-Australian architect and collaborator I’d met and worked with in Uganda, Ross Langdon, and his eight-month pregnant fiancé were brutally shot in the Nairobi Westgate Shopping Centre attack, dying within minutes. Terrorism is often much closer to us than we think,

planning and plotting as we soundly sleep unawares in our beds.

Amidst this tumultuous backdrop, the studio and design initiatives my students and I undertook provided a haven of serenity. Through my studios I got to know the culture of Sri Lanka (and the other places I have lived and worked in) intimately, making lasting friendships now nurtured by Facebook, related social media, and subsequent visits.

Only one per cent of the Sri Lankan population receives a university education; hence my students were truly exceptional and produced remarkable work.

Not long after I arrived in Colombo, through a weekly NGO forum/coordination meeting, I met Norwegian architect, Pål Kavli, who worked for NGO FORUT and was one of the few other western architects on the island engaged in tsunami-related reconstruction, as most involved were engineers. Pål joined me in our studio from time-to-time, and we attempted to organise a 'live' residential village project with FORUT in the Tamil Tiger controlled North as a peace-making mission employing design for social change.

FORUT was one of the few NGO's committed to assisting in the north; the Norwegians have historically played an important role there as regional peacemaker/arbitrator.

But the morning of our site visit, which we had planned for weeks, a group of downcast students awaited us outside the architecture school. Their parents, fearful for their safety, had obliged them to forego the trip at the last minute—and in retrospect, wisely—that afternoon a well-known writer and acquaintance from the Colombo Book Club, Nihal De Silva, was killed in a landmine explosion while crossing the Wilpattu National Park up north along a route we had planned to take. The whole world seemed a metaphorical, if not very real, minefield at that time.

As an architect I caught a glimpse of what happened (or didn't happen) to many 'relief funds'—some of which went to absurdly high NGO salaries and perks—like upmarket housing, abundant household help, private school fees and chauffeured transportation. While it is expected that 30-40% of donations are legitimately intended to cover NGO overhead, and despite the low cost of living in Sri Lanka, it is reasonable to suggest that the figure was more like 70-90% in many instances, although certainly not all NGO's were so 'generous' to their staff in 'hardship' posts. Direct donation to individuals in need, where possible, always ensures safe delivery. But large-scale projects require management, and management incurs a cost—the question is how much cost.

In the face of corruption and ‘irregularity’, it is hard to know how best to be impactful or to react—whether to exercise ‘restraint of tongue and pen’ (turn a blind eye or be fired if not executed in some arenas), or to confront—keeping in mind that through non-action, one can easily become participatory. While doing nothing can be perceived as the safer, more comfortable avenue and often more conducive to job security, it is not by any means the more ethical. I felt somewhat powerless at that juncture, often reflecting on that well-known AA prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr:

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things, I cannot change; courage to change the  
things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

Short of a seared conscience, it can be psychologically difficult (and certainly was for me) to ignore abuse of power and funds. While walking past a seriously injured person in the street and doing nothing would be, by common standards of morality, highly uncaring and unethical (the French would designate such behaviour as criminal or ‘non-assistance à personne en danger’), walking past an illegally parked car would ordinarily be inconsequential, requiring action only from the appropriate authorities.

So, the dilemma seemed to involve a question of degree as well as context.

I believe that the threads of malevolence I have encountered in my travels and related practice, teaching and research (much in the developing world) warrant attention, in the hope (naïve, perhaps) that exposure and accountability will curb misdeed.

As Albert Einstein said, *'the world is a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it.'*<sup>1</sup>

'Whistle-blowing' however can and has proven to be dangerous, as this narrative will demonstrate.

After my stint in Sri Lanka (I had spent the prior six years between Stanford and Paris), I tried my hand teaching at a self-proclaimed 'Christian' university in the mid-west of the United States, only to find myself extremely let down by the rampant provincialism and in-fighting. I have learned that branding and marketing do not necessarily accurately reflect content and praxis by any means. Concurrent to the realisation that I was apparently not going to be an asset in the ways the university had anticipated and the venue was not going to provide the spiritual connection and fellowship I

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/evil> last accessed 13 August 2014.



need-ed, a job offer materialised at Duksung U in South Korea (which I was to affiliate to U Hawaii), building on my Fulbright ‘live project’ work. Spiritual warfare (‘the Christian concept of taking a stand against supernatural evil forces’)<sup>2</sup>, seemingly within the Christian university, intensified. Additionally, and very oddly, a few visitors wrapped in seamless black cloaks showed up at some of my lectures and disappeared before I could catch or chat with them—perturbing, though not preoccupying. In retrospect, I had indubitably ignored serious warning signs.

My architecture students and I in mid-west America developed and designed a large tsunami village for Hindu widows south of Chennai, India, which is now under construction, albeit not faithfully to the plans we had meticulously drawn up despite constant interlocution with the client, troublesome when one thinks how the time, attention and effort might have been more effectively and ‘sustainably’ deployed.

Concurrently and per a fairly common *modus operandi*, the more success I seemed to have in the design studio with students, the more potential flak or

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual\\_warfare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_warfare) last accessed 13 August 2014.

envy I seemed to elicit from colleagues and administrators (with little or no teaching to do).

The pattern has proven reliable over the years—ostensibly beyond the usual academic politics. When my evaluations were excellent, resentment was palpable—when they were less than stellar, I was held to account; it was a no-win situation.

As Bette Midler has said, *‘The worst part of success is trying to find someone who is happy for you.’*<sup>3</sup>

Of course, I did make some dear and close friends—mature and accomplished colleagues (some who became collaborators) involved in their own fascinating projects and research—who provided much-appreciated support and expertise. It should be noted that many of our ‘live projects’ were direct or indirect charitable ‘missions’ projects and as such attracted negative attention on the spiritual plane, drawing us into the usual treacherous battlefield of divergent public opinion, jealousy, and sometimes wilful sabotage.

A question often asked was, ‘How do you get these projects?’—easy to answer as paucity is rampant the world over; one only has to be willing to ‘make poverty history’ (Oxfam).

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/jealousy> last accessed 2 October 2014.

I would be remiss not to mention, before moving on, a tragic phenomenon revealed with the wreckage of the tsunami throughout South Asia: the trafficking and sexual abuse of children (an ongoing and horrendously widespread phenomenon which encompasses areas as 'sophisticated' as Cambridge today).

One has only to 'google' 'child trafficking tsunami' for endless heart-breaking tales, for instance:

**South Asia: U.S. "horrified" at child trafficking in tsunami aftermath**

<http://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/south-asia-us-horrified-child-trafficking-tsunami-aftermath>

**DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN TSUNAMI SURVIVORS NEED IMMEDIATE PROTECTION FROM TRAFFICKING AND ABUSE**

[HTTP://WWW.WOMENSREFUGEECOMMISSION.ORG/PRESS-ROOM/409-DISPLACED-WOMEN-AND-CHILDREN- TSUNAMI-SURVIVORS-NEED-IMMEDIATE-PROTECTION-FROM-TRAFFICKING-AND-ABUSE](http://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/press-room/409-displaced-women-and-children-tsunami-survivors-need-immediate-protection-from-trafficking-and-abuse)

**The sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka Research Report**

<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/sexual-abuse-commercial-sexual-exploitation-and-trafficking-children-sri-lanka-sri-lanka>

No words suffice to describe the cruelty and horrendous implications of trafficking. Of minimal consolation is Mahatma Gandhi's reflection: *'When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it—always.'*<sup>4</sup>

In many respects, the Cambridge Wolfson Visiting Fellows' house, where I was a member, had become a hub of counter-terrorist activism. While women are unlikely participants in this arena, the fierce Tamil Tiger women soldiers (original suicide-bombers) and growing feminine jihadist population at the larger international (ISIS) level warranted, to my view, some sort of counter-commitment besides deep concern. Being non-participatory while 'in the field' was out of the question. Whenever I thought I'd 'take a break' and retire into sedentary, routine academe or practice, the history of the four nuns would haunt me and confirm that neutrality was no option—an attribute I reproach in many of my colleagues, who seem largely to perpetuate denial regarding world affairs, spirituality, death and the 'after-life.' I suppose, too, that having clients and friends

---

<sup>4</sup><http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/evil> last accessed 13 August 2014.

involved in national security and government, it was inevitable that I adopt some of their interest.

But it was with Tony, engaged in rescuing abused children and women, as well as serving as the director of Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka, that I actually took some risk and ventured forth into the isolated north of the island—despite repeated warnings from the US Embassy and Fulbright Commission, and independent of my academic work. When we arrived at the ‘border’ in Habitat’s well-travelled van, several Tamil Tiger soldiers jumped aboard brandishing ominous looking weapons. We had an infant in our crew of seven which proved an effective common denominator. The Tigers seemed quite happy that I was in tow (as I had been warned) and wanted to take pictures with me (which I cautiously refused). Once we got our official-looking letter stamped with the Tiger insignia, we proceeded onwards to the devastated northern beaches. NGO’s generally didn’t make it this far, and the situation was truly appalling. While Habitat was considered Christian, as were my companions, the Tigers didn’t appear to mind at all what faith we represented—help would clearly be appreciated wherever it came from. Tony was a constant reminder of the Quaker adage, ‘Let your life speak’.

Habitat was, for him, a kind of ‘front’ for out-reach which afforded unrestricted access to the abused and

destitute. He often said his work was, on many levels, very dangerous. Travelling with him and his team I learned, among other things, that the abused also become abusers, and the resulting vicious cycle can be extremely difficult to break.

The crew spent the night at a pastor's home (missionaries in the Tamil-controlled north, which at the time was not dissimilar to operating in ISIS-controlled territory), awaiting an accountant who was to arrive from Bangkok to review Habitat's financial records, which he did yearly. Due to problems at the border, Peter sadly missed a lavish Sri Lankan welcome breakfast prepared for him days in advance. When he finally did turn up (a few days late), he arrived fashionably dressed in safari gear (the fare worn mostly by those who glamorize safari treks and remote expeditions)—a kind, handsome, ginger-haired man whom I was to see again very briefly, like ships passing in the night, as a tourist with my children and grandchildren in Bangkok some years later.

Apart from a few Tamil-backed NGO's and FORUT, Habitat for Humanity was probably the only significant international organisation involved in reconstruction in the Sri Lankan north. Tony couldn't build from our designs unfortunately due to what he called 'equity issues'—i.e. Habitat had already built hundreds of 'cookie-

cutter' homes; if the group built from our 'up-market' designs, though similar in cost to the homes under construction, envy and social tension were likely to ensue. In a conflict-ridden zone, any further antagonism was to be mitigated, so Habitat insisted on treating everybody equally or 'equitably', and design was an important consideration. We had arrived on the scene a little too late.

Tsunami victims living under black plastic garbage bags (whose lack of security encouraged rampant abuse, although their isolation protected them from that of the southern tourists) were, of course, grateful for Habitat 'cookie-cutter' homes—a luxury in comparison to their make-shift 'tents' with their lack of sanitation outside of the beach. The 'mujahedin' Hindu Tigers were growing increasingly and wretchedly poor and desperate. Was Habitat's message of hope and charity connecting with them at all, we wondered? The full-fledged war that eventually broke out on the island preempted any peaceful north-south settlement, bringing further devastation, exploitation, and widespread abuse, including rampant torture. The Muslim population in the region, though a minority compared to the Hindu Tamil presence, suffered similarly. The Muslims were by-and-large fairly radical, and on a ferry crossing home, I felt like I might as well have been in Saudi Arabia given

the number of women on board heavily clad in black, wearing gloves and face veils in the sweltering Sri Lankan heat.

The rest of the year progressed relatively benignly, whatever that implied. At the airport in Chennai returning from a visit to our ‘widows’ village’ construction site, I was followed by a persistent Indian woman recording my every move in a video with her phone, and whom I only managed to lose after about ten minutes. She wore a light-coloured floral sari and had audaciously pursued me into the ladies’ room, where I had attempted to vanish to no avail; only confrontation and a threat to call the security guards turned her away. It wasn’t your average teaching year, but I wouldn’t have traded it for anything. I was sad not to be able to go back north and do more than a visit, however.





# Korea

HOPING FOR SOME MUCH-NEEDED ‘downtime’ given my anticipated nine contact hour/week teaching schedule in Seoul, and looking forward to respite from the ravages of ‘extreme climate destabilization’, war and more recently, the stint in the mid-west U.S. at Judson U, I headed to Korea via Cambridge, rapidly learning en route that ‘spiritual warfare’ has no geographical boundaries—though one could argue that ‘principalities and powers’ do. I sat next to a woman completely veiled in black, and who remained so, for the entire duration of my flight. And though I was to teach in an Interior Design department, I arrived at a filthy and dilapidated apartment with the barest minimum of furniture—a lopsided swivel chair, a single bed that reeked of cigarette

smoke, and an ancient metal desk. The apartment itself, however, was architect-designed and gave onto a delightful garden from which I could watch the seasons turn. I had warm ex-pat neighbours, a tax-free salary, and distinguished colleagues. It only took a week or two to get the apartment into shape, and I soon discovered there was a French bakery around the corner, and I had only a brisk, enjoyable ten-minute walk to school.

Though there were some minor language difficulties and cultural misunderstandings as might be expected (described in the academic articles at the end of this book), tribulation really began when I took a 'tourist trip' to North Korea. On the bus were two self-proclaimed 'spies'—one from the Italian Embassy in Seoul who was vetting a post as Italian Ambassador to Pyongyang, and another, more discreet traveller, claimed to be a news reporter/photographer who kindly showed us all how to hide digital photographs on our cameras and cell phones (these devices were systematically checked for 'unauthorised' photography at the border upon exit). Much of my everyday routine (again, described in greater detail at the end of this book) was what might be anticipated by any visiting university professor in an 'exotic,' cross-cultural setting.

The internationally engaged architect's itinerant profession, in tandem with evermore peripatetic

teaching venues, provides unparalleled mobility and access, and many of us indubitably have the makings of first-rate moles. Indeed, much of the information recounted herewith would never have been accessible via satellite or computer monitoring, from hacking to 'remote desktop' surveillance, or even official on-the-ground 'smoke and mirror' operations.

It often seemed I was often just in the right (or wrong) place at the right or wrong time—spiritual 'serendipity' one might say. Travelling to North Korea was extremely painful (and reminiscent of Moscow during the Cold War thirty years or so earlier) in that we were obliged to patiently sit on a cold bus in a parking lot at the border for hours before the North Korean officials allowed us to proceed. We were led and followed at a snail's pace by vehicular escorts for the entire duration of our journey, which we had hoped would be a stress-free, enjoyable visit.

Despite our tour being restricted to well-maintained historic sites, North Korea appeared extremely poor.

Everyone we saw on the street wore traditional white and blue indigenous garb, almost a kind of uniform. Once we finally made it across the border, everything had seemed to go relatively smoothly—for the first few hours.

We bought postcards which showed North Korean propaganda (nothing else was available) at a state-run

tourist shop. We mailed them off with bright red stamps and benign inscriptions (knowing they would be scrutinised) like 'Wish you were here' or 'You don't know what you're missing!' or 'Miss you terribly, Happy Birthday' which made us all laugh (since our inscriptions were tongue-in-cheek)—laughter which, however, set off a chain of unfortunate events which quickly made us realise just how tenuous our situation was.

Our uninhibited amusement made the guards not only curious but highly suspicious, thinking we were undoubtedly laughing at them or at some offhand slur about North Korean culture. Our 'escorts' chose to interrogate the young-looking Italian (future 'Italian ambassador' who elected to remain anonymous vis-à-vis his inquisitors). They asked to see his passport, which was ordinary enough and checked his visa—apparently a tourist visa similar to ours. Then they took him to a room apart, and we did not see or hear of him further for what seemed an eternity.

Long, uncertain waiting appears to be a favourite chastisement for victims of controlling tyrants, and joy and complicity appear poorly tolerated by the oppressor in the oppressed. When the 'Italian ambassador' reappeared after several further tedious hours, he told us he had spent most of his time indeed waiting, like us, albeit in silence in a dark room. He further related that

he was thankfully not obliged to divulge his true identity, and when asked briefly by the North Korean guards what the laughter was all about, through the ‘art of diplomacy’ he apparently managed to appease his interlocutors with a commentary about his broken diet given the superb quality of the North Korean lunch—and by now everyone had learned not to laugh. Three months earlier two wandering tourists had been detained and imprisoned, and we certainly had no intention of following suit. It took just over a month for my family in Hawaii to receive the postcards which they tell me are treasured to this day.

We had an understandably difficult time enjoying the rest of our trip, as our ‘hosts’ had no doubt intended, and the ride back to Seoul felt long and harrowing despite the relatively short distance. Once safely back on familiar turf, I turned to the design of a large, expansive plaza for the Seoul National Museum of History and thought little more about the North Korean experience. Over the years architecture has proven a wonderful distraction from the woes of the world—although it indubitably has some of its own. I picked up a renovation project for the U.S. Embassy in Seoul as well, involving my design students at Duksung in both endeavours. The Embassy, at six storeys originally the tallest building in Seoul, was now a shabby, dilapidated pile and the U.S. government had been looking for a site for a new complex for over forty

years. At the time of writing things look hopeful—a previous site upon which construction had begun revealed archaeological treasures below grade as soon as excavation started, and work was halted at the insistence of the Korean government though \$13,000,000 had already been spent by the U.S. (taxpayer), never to be reimbursed. Plans for a new complex have been in the pipeline for years, with a new site (a section of property on United States Forces Korea’s Camp Coirer—i.e. an existing US military base) identified in 2011.

Interestingly, students seem to prefer working on high-end projects like embassies or dream houses to orphanages and tsunami villages for the destitute (for which design challenges can be far greater and more thought-provoking).

So, I try to prescribe a healthy mix, delegating the bulk of ‘live projects’ to professional practice since student work can sometimes be too amateurish to present to the less compassionate client.

But for pro-bono charity work, the paradigm makes good sense, with clients sometimes requested to contribute small donations according to their ability to the university towards scholarships, field trip expenses, books, or similar. Students get early hands-on internship experience through the model and are typically encouraged to work together collaboratively.

An Oxbridge alumni dinner brought me to the Seoul U.K. ambassador's residence for a networking event where I was introduced to a former Korean ambassador to Washington, and in the course of the evening, I casually related the North Korean incident, which appeared to have special meaning for Ambassador Lee Joon—because, as he explained, to his knowledge no future Italian embassy (or ambassador) had been planned for Pyongyang!

So, if it was indeed true that no 'future Italian ambassador' was in the pipeline for Pyong-yang, Fabrizio's pretence had just become baffling. As I was leaving the stately residence, a server in a black turban and hanbok (the native, loose-fitting Korean dress) bumped into me apologetically, smiled and took my picture. Clumsy surveillance, I told myself. Or paranoia? Like thinking, we were all being spied on until Snowden broke the news that in fact, we were.

The next day I called the Italian Embassy in Seoul—it was no surprise that Fabrizio Giacometti, as his name read on the gilded Embassy calling card, was unknown to the switchboard operator there. Many nations are watching North Korea, and I guess intrigue is to be expected in this part of the world. I have come to realise that the unification of divided nations (or cities) is typically unlikely in that a host of jobs have to be lost on



‘one side of the fence’ to enable a merger (among other complex is-sues)—often leading to a war, as in Sri Lanka. In Cyprus, unification talks are generally perceived as a charade, and the talks to date have kept both north and south side ‘leadership’ employed for over forty years. As man struggles for survival, his natural tendency seems to be competitive rather than collaborative. It has been my experience that collaboration is a far more effective and rewarding m.o., both practically and psychologically, but collaboration takes wisdom, experience, willingness, compromise and maturity to both initiate and cultivate. I pushed the puzzle of Fabrizio to the back of my mind.

Old Seoul is a rabbit’s warren of narrow cobblestone lanes and historic tiled-roof Korean houses, mostly well-preserved and often renovated in ‘upmarket’ fashion around trendy commercial nodes these days—and the perfect place for a James Bond chase, which a small group of emerging ‘shadows’ in black seemed to appreciate wholly. As I cautiously strolled down the steep incline of the old town’s central spine admiring its architecture and the stunning views of modern Seoul, a local resident stepped out of his house, revealing a rich traditional interior. As I strained to peek inside, the man kindly asked if I would like to visit—an irresistible offer for an ever-inquisitive architect—and seemingly providing some potential crisis intervention. The tight courtyard

was bordered by a tapered wooden veranda linking the various contiguous rooms and their sliding wooden doors around a well-manicured, pristine archetypal Korean garden. The colourful garden was further flanked by a few large terracotta pots which would historically have

served for refrigeration. As I slid one of the doors open to explore the house itself, I interrupted a tea ceremony: four figures, seemingly women in black abayas, sat on the floor and motioned to me to join them. The dream-like improbability of the situation yielded a jolt. The man who had opened the door extending the invitation was now, shockingly, trying to block the door—but somehow, I managed to push through him and promptly bolted into the street. Given the stature and build of those who now trailed me, it seemed likely that they were not women, but men dressed in feminine Islamic garb.

As I ran, I felt evil adrift—like the tip of a great, bottomless iceberg. This old Seoul set-up implied alarming tracking capability, particularly as I was not carrying my cell phone with me. I had sent an email to a friend earlier mentioning I was going for a stroll in the old quarter but had not indicated anything else. As I glanced back, there was no longer a vague party in black chasing me but a whole gang of Asian-looking men, so my intuition in that respect had been correct. I could not

imagine what their interest in an architecture professor could be. With limited time for further reflection, I ran as if in a high-stake marathon.

My principal and initial experience with Islam had been a startling encounter year earlier at Parsons School of Design in Paris, where I had had some delightful Saudi architecture students. Through them, I had met an array of interesting Saudi characters including Bin Mahfouz, Al-Hejailan and Bin Laden family members—but I could not through them establish or make any connection to the events unfolding here. My mind raced.

A Pakistani-French filmmaker who had lost no time in introducing me briefly to the strange world of purdah and domestic violence came to mind. But since becoming a Christian, my main Pakistani friends were Christians in Sri Lanka fleeing persecution on their home front. It was impossible to connect the dots.

By now, though running downhill at a gazelle's pace, I could hear loud footsteps close behind. This chase was no game. What had I done to warrant such adversaries? Suddenly I caught a taxi in my peripheral vision dropping someone off in an alleyway to the right; I ran to the car and escaped by a hair with a fist pounding on a locked window and my heart thumping heavily. Dusk had started to fall and a flurry of glowing red roof-top neon crosses illuminating Seoul's churches reminded me of an

ever-present Divine hand. My pursuers would not have related to the salvation and hope the red neon crosses represented—their witlessness the only reason I could imagine at the time for their pursuit.

It seemed unlikely that my colleagues, friends, and even the police would have believed my narrative, so foolishly, perhaps, I did not relate the incident immediately. I felt I needed to ‘regroup’ fast and first; I still had a semester of teaching to complete and felt ‘stuck’ in Seoul for a while. While there was no obvious link to any-thing that had happened in North Korea, Fabrizio remained an unsolved mystery. Also, the history museum project as it related to the north-south divide was becoming to some extent political; I decided to take my plight to Joon, the former Korean ambassador to the United States whom I had met at the British enclave.

Joon immediately expressed much-appreciated concern and felt that my pursuers, probably not thugs interested in my handbag, clearly thought I had or knew something of import to them. The days of microfilm were long gone, and since my Cold War years working as an architect at the US Ambassador’s Residence in Moscow, I had learned to live life transparently—since we were to assume everything was ‘bugged’ and we could ‘win them over’ indirectly through their eavesdropping. So, what were these buffoons after? Certainly not my teaching

notes, or plans of the history museum, available online. If this were a terrorist group, was it enough that I was Christian (as are so many millions of Koreans today), or a professional woman in higher education? Could the intimidation be racially-inspired? My brain continued to search its years of mental archives seeking a rationale. Perhaps this was just a random extremist group and they were singling me out for no more reason than the attack on the tourist bus in Tunis of recent. Perhaps rationality was not what I should be looking for or perhaps, I had just been in the wrong place at the wrong time—but

I instinctively felt there was more involved than happenstance. The year was 2008, and looking back, I think ISIS or Al-Qaida ‘ sleeper cells ’ were in existence long before their names became household words—ever since the disintegration of the Turkish Caliphate in 1923 and probably even long before that. But at the time there was certainly nothing to suggest that my Asian pursuers had anything to do with caliphate stirrings except for their use of abayas.

From what I have been able to glean from my student hacker prodigies over the years, it would seem that surveillance operations, ostensibly monitoring ‘ we the people ’ more closely than groups like ISIS until they are literally on one’s doorstep or ‘ in your face ’, cannot compete with terrorist hacking and monitoring

techniques or the 'dark web'. I suspected that the email I had sent out before my walk and on-street camera surveillance had been enough to identify my whereabouts to rapidly enable the improvised 'tea ceremony' for whatever reason I was of interest. It was obvious that I would have to be more vigilant, not just with electronic communications but in my 'architectural' walks. Hastily yet thoughtfully I added a whistle, mace, small electric torch, flash drive, and identification tag to my keychain collection, and threw a change of underwear along with my French passport into my bag for any required future rush exoduses. Joon had told me I was welcome to stay with his family anytime, which was of great comfort. He also recommended I go to the police and communicate with my school, which I ultimately did, but as expected, received little reassurance, help or sympathy.

While it seemed unlikely that this event was a random encounter, not knowing what to do I focused on my work and attempted to move on, engaging mainly in 'group tourism' rather than individual promenades. As time passed, I began to think there was perhaps a case of mistaken identity involved, to do with my day-trip to North Korea, or that someone had left or planted something in my flat.

My workaholic response was indubitably a form of denial; I finished another academic article and continued to keep a low profile, watching my back. Construction had started on the Seoul History Museum project, and we were excited by the marvel of 3D reality.

About this time, Christians in Europe and the Middle East had begun to postulate that the anti-Christ of the Bible was likely to be a Muslim extremist, not another European dictator like Hitler, as had previously been hypothesised. Though improbable I marginally explored the possibility that my pursuers might have a connection with the rising caliphate—of which North Korea could be yet another head of a multi-headed hydra. While it seemed far-fetched to think that atheist Kim Jong-Un might be connected to ‘extremist Islam’, evil has many faces. My brain was having a hard time manipulating the pieces of this puzzle. But I suspected that everything would eventually ‘come out in the wash’, and that the ‘scholars’ back at the Cambridge Fellows’ House would have some interesting if not enlightening thoughts on the matter. I was anxious to exit Korea.

Two options presented short of returning to Cambridge—a one-year D.Arch. programme in Hawaii, or a teaching stint in North Cyprus (which I did not understand to be so very different from mainstream Europe at the time). Family, friends and budgetary

restrictions suggested Cyprus, which promised a fascinating and re-warding experience—it was after all a balmy Mediterranean island. In the end, Cyprus was to prove an invaluable watch-post on Turkey, where Erdogan was building a huge, Fascist-style palace in Ankara more imposing than Versailles—ostensibly as a seat for the next caliph, and for which many contenders besides Erdogan had begun to emerge throughout the Middle East.





# Cyprus

IT ALSO MADE SENSE to opt for Cyprus over the one-year ‘professional development’ D.Arch. Programme at the University of Hawaii (where I had previously taught) as NAAB (the National Architectural Accrediting Board) was scheduled to retroactively revise 3-year terminal professional degree nomenclature from ‘M.Arch.’ (a degree I held) to ‘D.Arch.’, although U.S. universities with qualifying programmes were slow to embrace the title upgrade. The new dean was also rumoured to be a bully, and I couldn’t see subjecting myself to abuse when I could have that experience at institutions where I’d be handsomely remunerated.

I believe God often puts us where he wants us, when we seek His will, by closing and opening doors that

seemingly lie ahead, and at this moment in my life, my 'territory was (ostensibly) being enlarged' to the Mediterranean—as with Sri Lanka, another divided island nation. And the potential for comparative academic research in planning, development, and conflict was enormous.

If corruption is rampant in the developing world, American and European universities are often loaded with back-biting, ferocious academic politics, and one-upmanship, with professors plotting against each other in fierce and almost pathetic competition (over things like parking spaces, trash cans, office size, stylistic language, power plays and teaching schedules)—as opposed to focusing collaboratively on the education and growth of their students and rewarding research projects.

Cyprus was certainly no exception and was to prove dangerous on several fronts.

The first time I noticed something truly amiss on the island was with my students while travelling from Guzelyurt to Nicosia on a field trip; during the 45-minute east-west highway journey between the two small cities my students counted 23 brothels, literally on the highway itself—with others down side roads, and each with a telling name like 'Lipstick', 'Barcode', 'Playboy', etc. Each brothel consisted of a shabby motel structure behind a

glitzier main 'disco'/bar building. My students, mostly Turkish and North Cypriot, explained that the brothels were full of young, mostly Eastern European women who had been trafficked and, everyone agreed, belonged in university instead.

As we considered the enormity of the problem and its implications, I decided to attempt (yet another) architectural 'live project': this time a hostel or halfway house to where such young women might 'escape', find refuge and move on to higher education—a 'bridge back to life'. Two women colleagues at my university agreed to collaborate, and we ran the project in several design studios during the autumn term of 2009. Most of our students took the project very seriously, as did the wife of the then-current North Cypriot president. However, 'sociological background research' was to take us into dark corners of the island where we discovered that many local male students, staff and faculty members from both the North and South sides were frequent visitors to these establishments—as were, possibly, some of my very own students. I have learned that exploitative behaviour, when allowed to run its course, often ends up in severe unhappiness for offenders as well as their victims. The mission at hand was quickly becoming more than architectural and socio-logical.

It further became evident, through interviews and surveys, that the brothels, as well as the many casinos and some of the dozen or so ‘universities’ on the island, were interconnected and interdependent, with the schools and casinos serving as money laundering machines—not just for trafficking but for drugs and arms commerce. Since Turkish-occupied North Cyprus is something of a ‘no man’s land’, it is perceived by many as a place where ‘anything goes’, attracting a plethora of ‘misfits’. As we continued to investigate the trafficking phenomenon, communicating with NGO’s and religious bodies zealously working to alleviate the plight of these women, we sensed we were becoming a ‘thorn in somebody’s side’—particularly that of our university administrators, even though, as mentioned, the contested nation’s president’s wife, a staunch advocate of women’s rights, was wholly in favour of our initiative.

Two camps rapidly emerged, and spring semester I was taken off teaching and put on an intensive research agenda which excluded involvement in ‘island politics’. Summer term I was shipped off to Canterbury, England to head a fledgling satellite design school there. Indubitably other reasons for my transfer besides the attention I had been drawing to trafficking abounded—still, the new venue seemed most definitely related to project focus and my overly high-tech teaching style. My

teaching assistant, a Christian Nigerian graduate student who had been promised a scholarship by the university, was dismissed from his job two weeks after the term had started, with no scholarship. This back-handed reneging on promises was to characterise many of my dealings with the Middle East (by the way, Ogah, my TA in Uganda, used to say in private that ‘the reason Muslims will not allow churches and the overt practice of Christianity on their turf is because Mohammed cannot compete with Jesus’).

While the Koran calls for women to dress modestly, many Middle Eastern and Asian women (including Coptic Christians, Catholics, Hindus and Muslims) traditionally cover their heads in public. In Saudi Arabia, where customary/cultural Muslim dress is carried to an extreme, women react in shock when told the Koran does not require veiling and headscarves (even though they are assumed to have read the book). Many of my Turkish students wore head-scarves, as did some of the North Cypriots (though rarer), and they carried this tradition with them to Canterbury. The North Cypriots themselves generally professed to be ‘fed up’ with Turkish rule, although they claimed the Turks saved their lives during the 1974 uprising for which they remained grateful—albeit many had not yet been born. Most were resentful of being ‘annexed’ by Turkey, and Turkish

soldiers, friendly enough, were ubiquitous throughout North Cyprus, where the buffer zone remains home to many UN troops today, including the notorious British ‘BBC’.

Before being ‘deported’ to Canterbury (ironically a fabulous place in which to find myself), I had spent a year and a half in Cyprus at two different universities in the north as well as having served as a guest critic/professor at several universities in the south. The Turkish teaching routine (emblematic of the Middle East) had been a shock to my system, requiring professors to be on site and in their offices, if not in the class-room or studio, eight hours a day, five days a week. Exterior site visits and meetings were essentially forbidden unless permission was officially obtained, making research problematic and precarious. There was a pervasive spirit of distrust—another indication that something was ‘rotten in Denmark’. Finally, according to one of the former vice-chancellors, all the school computers and offices were monitored via ‘remote desktop’ or similar surveillance technology, adding to the aura of a ‘big brother’ caliphate.

Unbeknownst to me at the time of my initial hiring, there had just been a school-wide faculty strike, and the administration had responded by firing the entire faculty. Hence, I had been given the responsibility of 120

students rather than the usual 10-15 in one of my studios. Eventually, I left this university thinking that the five-day-a-week on-site schedule was peculiar to that establishment, only to discover it was worse and more rigorously enforced at the second institution I joined and throughout the Levant. In competition with U. Hawaii, the dean at this school was a tough Turkish female ‘despot’, and I learned that the Turkish system is full of underpaid, over-worked women professors and administrators who seem to enjoy displacing their own maltreatment on underlings and students. Practice was beginning to look more appealing.

To compound the chaos, in Canterbury, I was asked to teach twelve courses per term as opposed to the usual two or three—covering architecture, interior design, and graphic design.

The situation proved untenable, and in order to exit with my life and career intact, I had to call in the local British police and Architects Benevolent Society in London, threatening a lawsuit in UK courts—where North Cypriot/Turkish standards would never hold. To this day our settlement agreement interdicts discussion, and I am forbidden to write about the experience in depth (not to mention that I might end up like Salmon Rushdie). Suffice it to say that the Canterbury school may well harbour a terrorist sleeper cell of some sort in



addition to a money-laundering operation and is being watched closely by the UK's Counter-Terrorism Office.

I had taken my students to the stone work-shop and evensong services of Canterbury Cathedral which they seemed to enjoy tremendously, never having had the opportunity to 'go to church' before not realising evensong was 'church' perhaps—let alone admire the Cathedral's stunning Christian art, architecture and sculpture. Imagine taking students to 'church' in Turkey or Saudi Arabia—it could have cost me my life. I went to a morning Communion service at the Cathedral daily which proved to ground me, as well as proffering new friends and untold unexpected resources.

The University of Kent Architecture School also proved munificent, encouraging me to bring students to their lectures and thereby reducing some of the awful pressure of my teaching load. And of course, Cambridge, which we visited together on a field trip, was relatively close, as were my friends, clients and colleagues in London—another escape route which I rarely mentioned to anyone and which I ultimately had to employ.

One day while strolling through Canterbury's historic lanes I distinctly felt I was (again) being followed—though the memory of old Seoul weighed on me I had perhaps been remiss in letting my guard down. Should I duck into the Cathedral and was it a safe place to hide (or

as the site of several famous murders would this be ‘tempting fate’), I wondered.

What about Starbucks next door or one of the upmarket boutiques or local book store? My mind raced. Then from the direction of my pursuer, I heard my name called. I turned around, reluctantly, to see Adam, our friendly tour guide.

But he was not alone. With him was a woman wearing a black headscarf, partially covering her face. One of my students perhaps? No, I knew my group well, and none of them dressed quite so conservatively. I felt it was definitely becoming time to explore new employment.

Instinctively I yelled towards Adam, ‘Hey, nice seeing you, gotta run! Come visit me at school sometime!’ and bolted for my life, towards and into the Cathedral, bumping head-long into Archbishop Rowan Williams as I crossed the sanctuary transept. When my pursuers, who had followed me into the church, saw the mishap, they stopped in their tracks and turned around, walking gingerly out of the Gothic minster.

Rowan had seemingly and unwittingly intervened in my imminent demise. I recalled the red neon crosses on the church roof-tops in Seoul—saved again.

I apologised to Rowan and sat down for long prayer. So long that any pursuer would have become immensely bored waiting for me (prayer always works!). I took the

back, little-known pathway home through the Cathedral gardens—telling myself I would have to be more cautious. And rapidly find a new job—even MI5 would be tamer it seemed.

It was about this time that professors were notified that accreditation visitors would be arriving from Cyprus. I had already been manipulated into a kind of *purdah* in Canterbury, although I needed to return to Cyprus to close down my Ottoman-style village house in Bellapais and sell my car. There was no point in subjecting myself any further to the chicaneries of the Levant I had decided—either in Cyprus or Canterbury.

I had been previously warned that the students were not very serious (which I liked to think I was adept at overcoming). But nobody had told me about the spurious academic (if one could call it that) system, where four years of college at the undergraduate level earned one an architect's Licence, and an additional 3-year PhD (in English) earned one a professorship—no building experience required! Nor had I been forewarned in any way about the draconian on-site office hour schedule. It seemed there was no interest in reform or international architectural education whatsoever and I felt the most positive impact I could have at this point was simply to be supportive to some missionary friends who lived near Bellapais.

I expected my return to Cyprus to be clouded with complications, but it was not. My Pegasus flight via Istanbul was uneventful—it was good to ‘get out’ of Canterbury in fact. I looked forward to reconnecting with my friends and colleagues on the south side of the island, which included a Harvard satellite programme in Environmental and Public Health with CUT in Limassol. The northerners usually hated it when I went south and vice versa, but this time nobody seemed to mind in the least. Was I finally no longer a pawn in the corridors of power, what they were, worth shadowing? Something had changed. Obsessive control is such that when it’s gone one almost misses it—a kind of ‘Stock-holm syndrome’, or perhaps just disappointment at indifference. In any case, I packed up relatively easily and left a bunch of superfluous possessions with friends and acquaintances, before saying good-bye. In order to move on in my career, I needed to wrap up the Canterbury venue—I remember thinking it amazing how architecturally remarkable places could be so tarnished and rendered so banal, or even dangerous, by people and circumstances.

It was at Ercan airport on my way out of North Cyprus, just when I thought ‘the coast was clear’, that a new ‘escapade’ commenced.

I had flown in, some eighteen months earlier, over the spectacular Gobi Desert from Korea—a long but stunning flight, via Istanbul, not knowing what to expect or why exactly I had been ‘called in’ by my ‘higher power’—possibly something to do with a few individuals, like Ogah.

At the departure gate of the small rural airport, I presented my boarding pass and French passport to the immigration officer.

‘Madam,’ I heard him say, ‘we cannot let you leave the country.’ I looked at him in disbelief. Knowing things had been going too smoothly, and knowing that all my papers were in order, I diffidently asked,

‘Is there a problem?’

‘Would you step aside please?’ the official responded.

And an old familiar waiting game began. I took a seat as motioned in an institutional orange plastic chair against an institutional green wall and waited patiently for some sort of questioning or search. I watched my plane leave and continued to wait. When I protested, I was told that the chief would be with me shortly. I waited for another hour or so. Finally, I decided to take matters into my own hands, went to the ladies’ room, and while there called a friend and asked her to come to pick me up. I had had a similar experience in Communist Poland years before with a sick husband and baby in tow, and we

had had no option but to turn back (sometime after midnight) to explore alternatives. I had remembered that there usually was a creative solution in difficult situations if one thought things through.

Christine, a retired Norwegian nurse I had met at one of the few surviving churches in the Cypriot north, kindly came to collect me straight away. Since I had just packed up my house and sold the car, she kindly put me up in her guest flat for the night while we commiserated about what to do next. We thought a drive across the border to the airport on the south side the next day would be worth a try. I was to use my US passport and Christine would go with me for an ostensible shopping spree. One thing the enemy typically does not count on is the complicity of the church, let alone 'divine intervention' and prayer!

We set out the next morning with my bags tucked away in the boot and out of sight.

Nobody had called or tried to contact me to my knowledge since I had left the airport. The event seemed to be a form of harassment only—the intent of which was unclear. Obviously, somebody or some entity with pull in the government, and very possibly my university, had wanted to thwart my departure for one reason or another, but motives were hard to follow or fathom. The string of events from country to country could hardly be haphazard artless stalking, as in the days of the Soviet

era—certainly more had to be involved. While these maddening episodes seemed connected somehow—involving more than intimidation or persecution—I had decided not to lose any sleep solving the riddle.

As Christine and I approached the border, passing through the vast, sun-scorched terracotta plains of North Cyprus, we prayed. Nonchalantly parking the car as required in the lot ahead of the crossing, we headed to the control booth, got our passports stamped, headed back to the car, and drove through with no questions asked. Apart from the efficacy of prayer, things could be so dysfunctional in North Cyprus (and South Cyprus if one recalls the banking fiasco in which many people lost substantial life savings), that our success wasn't all that surprising—but gratitude was nonetheless abundant. Christine took me to the airport in Larnaca where we light-heartedly said our good-byes. Once again, saved through the Cross.

When I got back to Canterbury, the head administrators seemed surprised to see me, their tell-tale disbelief enormously disconcerting. The larger connection still eluded me, and nobody seemed about to enlighten me in any way. The lawyers I had consulted ages ago as part of a fallback plan were costing me a fortune, so I conferred with the legal arm of the local, charitable Citizens Advice Bureau, where two elderly

gentlemen equipped me to file a suit on my own. At the threat of a lawsuit my aggressors backed off, and I headed to the south of France for some respite. With each transition, the next open door always came as a God-send, though inevitably incurred some 'vices-caches' or hurdles down the road: the never-ending cycle of spiritual warfare.



The architect: four countries four faces